

TO THE
CATHOLICKES
OF ENGLAND.

RIGHT HONORABLE, RIGHT WORSHIPFULL, AND MUCH RESPECTED:

VVE vnderwritten being appointed to serue the infected Catholicks of the Citty and Suburbs of London, with our spiritual assistance, hauing scene with our eyes the extreme necessity which many of the poorer sort are fallen into, by reason of the present sicknesse, do thinke our selues obliged euen in conscience, to make the same knowne vnto you, by a publicke letter, to the end that those, whom God hath ble^dst with sufficient ability and meanes, taking so weighty a matter into their serious consideration, may, through the help of his holy grace, resolue with themselves forthwith, to doe what in them lieth, and what in such an exigent Christian charity and duty bindeth euery one vnto, for the necessary support and reliefe of so great a multitude.

Wee doe protest vnto you seriously, euen vpon our soules and consciences, that the greatnesse of this calamitie exceedeth all beliefe, in so much as wee should neuer haue imagined the least part, of that which really is, had not our owne eyes, and daily experience sufficiently attested the same vnto vs, and wee may truly auerre, that this so great a desolation amongst our poore brethren, ioyned with the small meanes and power wee haue, to relieue them, is a farre more grievous affliction vnto vs, then all the labours and dangers, which wee vndergoe daily for their spirituall ayde and comfort.

There are some persons in the number of these afflicted, who, notwithstanding they were well borne, and bred, hauing beene constrained, through extremity of want, to sell, or pawne all they had, remaine shut vp within the bare walls of a poore chamber, hauing not wherewithall to allay the rage of hunger, nor scarcely to couer nakednesse. There are others, who, for the space of three dayes together haue not gotten a morsell of bread to put into their mouths. Wee haue iust cause to feare, that some doe perish for want of food: others for want of tendance: others for want of ordinary helpe, and remedies, with which they might easily escape death, and be cured. At this present there are aboute fifty severall families, which are visited, and shut vp; and truly such is the feeling, which many of these poore creatures haue, of this their most wretched estate, that finding themselves depriued of meanes whereby to liue, (all manner of worke fayling them at this time) they are brought euen to the brinke of despaire, wishing from their heart to be ceaz^d vpon with the sicknesse (if God were so pleased) thereby to hasten death, and with it, the end of this their languishing paine, which to them is worse then death it selfe.

The example of the Protestants, both in the Citty and the Countrey (which is well knowne to all) may bee no small inducement vnto Catholicks, to imitate their care, prouidence, and bounty in this behalfe. We haue heard of some particulers amongst them, which are very memorable. One noble man of theirs hath bestowed lately the summe of three hundred pounds, leauing it to the distribution of a Gentleman of good quality, who tooke the paines to visit the houses of the poore himselfe, and to deuide it amongst them with his owne hands. An other party of account (Sonne to an Alderman of London) hath beene scene to goe in person to seeke out the poore that wanted worke, being neighbours to such as were infected, and with his owne hands to bestow a large beneuolence amongst them. And if those who acknowledge no merit in good workes, out of a generous minde, or naturall compassion are so ready to assist their distressed brethren so plentifully; it may seeme that no lesse, but rather much more should bee expected at the hands of Catholicks, who professing, to belieue the doctrine of merit, haue thereby a farre higher motiue than Protestants haue to performe workes of Charity, and to open the bowells of mercy, especially in a time of so generall and pressing necessity, towards their poore and desolate brethren, who haue no expectation or hope of reliefe from any, but from them alone.

This publicke Declaration wee haue iudged necessary to make to all English Catholicks, particularly to those that are of ability, for the discharge of our owne soules, requesting, or rather coniuring all in generall, and euery one in particuler by the bowells of our Sauour Iesus Christ to make it their owne case, and to haue that saying of *S. Iohn* the Euangelist alwayes before their eyes, *He that shall haue the substance of the world, and shall see his brother haue neede, and shall shut his bowels from him; how doth the Charity of God abide in him?*

6. of October, 1636.

Antiq. d. E. 1636

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historica quiddam



